

*The countenancing of Mr. WHITEFIELD'S
Administrations,*

1507/1326 AND 7

The Secession of the BURGHERS,
CONSIDERED,
IN TWO LETTERS;

One to a Friend at *Ed---gh,*

AND
The other to a Friend at *Ab---deen,*

By **ALEXANDER MONCRIEF, A. M.**
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Stand fast in the faith, 1 COR. xvi. 13.

G L A S G O W:

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ACT, DECLARATION and TESTIMONY,

For the doctrine, worship, discipline, and government of the church of *Scotland*; agreeable to the Word of God, the Confession of Faith, the National Covenant of *Scotland*, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three nations: And against several steps of defection from the same, both in former and present times. By some ministers associate together for the exercise of church-government and discipline in a presbyterial capacity. With an introduction, containing the grounds of their associating into a presbytery, and the reasons of their emitting this Act and Testimony.

To which is added, The accession of the Reverend Mr. *Ralph Erskine*, and the Reverend Mr. *Thomas Mair*, to the said presbytery and the present testimony.

To all which is subjoined, ACTS and PROCEEDINGS of the MINISTERS and ELDERS associate together for the exercise of church-government and discipline in a presbyterial capacity, met at *Edinburgh*, May 16. 1739. Containing their DECLINATURE: Read in presence of the General Assembly, and given in to the Moderator thereof, May 17. 1739.

[Price Six-pence.]



*A LETTER to a Friend in Ed---gh,
concerning the countenancing of Mr.
WHITEFIELD'S administrations.*

S I R,

HAVING heard a few days ago, that Mr. *George Whitefield* was upon his return to *Scotland*; a sense of duty, and the love, regard, and esteem I have for you, and others of our friends with you, have constrained me to represent to you my grief and concern,—for your being so far left as to countenance and approve of the administrations of a professed member and priest of the superstitious church of *England*.

Let it be considered, That his mission and ordination flows only from a prelate; and that the prelate's power and authority has its conveyance from the *supremacy*, as its sole fountain and origin.

This argument alone shall be insisted a little upon at this time, without entering upon other things that may relate to the subject.

The only way of the conveyance of an ordinary call to the holy ministry, is by the choice and election of of the people, with solemn ordination by the imposition of the hands of the presbytery, *Acts* i. 23. vi. 3. xiv. 23. 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. But the priests of the church of *England* have nothing but the sole warrant and mission of the prelate: and therefore it cannot be warrantable, according to the word of God, to countenance such, and receive them as lawful ministers.

Christ's ministers whom we are to receive, have their commission from Christ, as King and only Head of his church; conveyed from church-officers of his own appointment, in the way revealed in his word,—and in a subordination to Christ as Head of his church, who appointed and gave the gifts of the ministry, *Eph. iv. 8, 11. 1 Cor. xii. 28. Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.* But it is evident to all who know any thing at all in this matter,—that *prelates* and their *curates* do receive and derive their church-power from, and are subordinate in its exercise to another head than Christ Jesus: and therefore they should not be received and subjected to as the ministers of Christ in his church. For they have taken a new holding, and have closed with a new conveyance of the ministry, and of the power to exercise the same, from an *usurped power* in the church, incroaching upon Christ's *royal prerogative*.

And therefore, in receiving them, we should homologate and approve of all the indignities done the Son of God, whom God hath set as King over Zion the hill of his holiness; and give our consent to that woful opposition made by men to the rules of God's word, by the corruption of *Prelacy*; and receive them as ministers of Christ, who have no commission from him, but are the ministers of *men*, by *men*,—and not by *Jesus Christ*, and *God the Father*, who raised him from the dead, seeing they do not hold the head, *Gal. i. 1. Col. ii. 19.*

And it is most certain, that if any plead it to be warrantable to hear one curate,—by the same argument they may hear a thousand of them, a sufficient number to fill all the pulpits of *Scotland*; for all and each one of them have the same mission and ordination. And is it come to this with a great many professors in *Scotland*,—that they can receive abjured *Prelacy*, and give up with presbyterial government,

to the maintenance of which all ranks in these lands have solemnly interposed the oath of God !

And if this is the case, it is an evident sign that *the great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly : The mighty man shall cry there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of trouble and distress, a day of wasteness and desolation, a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness :—A day of God's sending a sword to avenge the quarrel of his covenant :—The day that the Lord shall rise up to the prey,* Zeph. i. 14, 15. Lev. xxvi. 25. Zeph. iii. 8.

And shall the professors in these covenanted lands be careless, that that day overtake them as a thief; and overtake them in a course of sin and apostacy from the Lord ! *Who shall live when the Lord doth this !*

Should it not rather be their exercise to return unto the Lord, in the way of faith, repentance, and reformation ; as he is yet saying, *O Israel, return to the Lord thy God ; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity ?* Hos. xiv. 1.

And seeing they are called of God to such exercise, particularly in this day of darkness and perplexity, and treading down in the valley of vision ; curates cannot be fit persons to conduct them in the exercise of gospel-humiliation. They cannot be fit instruments in their public ministrations, to detect and lay open to their hearers the causes of God's wrath against these lands ; among a great variety of which are Prelacy, the hearing of curates, the supremacy, covenant-violation, oaths contradictory unto and subversive of the oath of the covenant,—and the bloody persecution of those who adhered to the Lord's cause, both in *Scotland* and *England*. For, in order to be thus faithful, they behoved first to cease to be curates ; to take a new holding of Christ the alone head of his church ; and to repent of their conformity to Prelacy, and of their breach of covenant.

It is surprizing, that professors, who had full accets to be acquainted with the received principles of this church, should be left to chuse such for spiritual guides and leaders to themselves. And however the whole generation, almost, ridicule the solemn engagements which these lands have come under to the most high God; yet they will have quite other sentiments in the day when God shall make inquisition for blood: When the cries of the souls under the altar, of them that were slain for the word of God, shall be heard; and when the Lord shall come out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity; and when the lord shall bring such awful judgments upon these covenant-breaking lands, the which whosoever heareth his ears shall tingle, *Psal. ix. 12. Rev. vi. 10, 11. Isa. xxvi. 21. Jer. xix. 3.*

Our desire that the Lord, in the sovereignty of his grace, might avert the awful threatened stroke, by inclining all ranks to return to himself, and to their allegiance unto him; or that he may give a reviving in our bondage, a blink of his countenance, a refreshing shower of divine influences,—before the dreadful hurricane blow through the isles of the sea, for rejecting Christ, for a despised gospel, and all the other abominations of these times; that so the dispersed of Israel might be gathered into one, and appoint themselves one head, and that many, yet strangers to him, might be brought to take sanctuary under the wings of the God of Israel; —is, we hope, among the motives of writing this missive. If what we have been directed to recommend to our friends, be rejected by them, we shall be sorry for it; and have good reason to think, that they themselves shall have no comfort from their conduct in the issue.

It may be evident to every unprejudiced person from the arguments adduced from the word of God, by our worthy ancestors, eminent both for learning and piety,

piety,—that Presbyterial government is the only form of government appointed by Christ in his church; and that *Prelacy* stands in a direct opposition unto the will of God revealed in his word; and is therefore most sinful, an high offence against God,—and matter of public scandal, and censurable according to the rules laid down in the scriptures of truth.

Wherefore, professors who have had access to be fully acquainted with the will of God revealed in his word, concerning the government of his church,—as it has been clearly delineated to them, from the word of truth, by the labours, by the contendings and sufferings of those who went before us,—cannot answer for their conduct, in uniting with prelatists in church-communion.

The pretence, that *catholic love* gives a warrant for uniting persons of all denominations in church-communion, if they maintain the essential truths of Christianity,—will by no means give any satisfaction to any thinking person, who impartially considers the matter.

For true genuine love to one another, is the fruit of the love of Christ shed abroad in the heart; and the love of Christ constraineth them to live unto Christ who died for them, and to gospel-obedience;—as our Lord has said, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*. But we should disobey his commandments, by Christian fellowship with such as transgress his commandments in the most open manner,—as prelatists do, in taking their holding of men, to the dishonour of Christ the alone Head of his church, and other ways.

We are commanded of God to withdraw from such as walk disorderly, and not according to the rule of his word, *Rom. xvi. 17, 18. 2 Thess. iii. 6*. And it is very manifest, that *Prelacy* and *Erastianism* are gross corruptions; the inventions of men of corrupt minds, by which *they serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their*

awn belly, Rom. xvi. 18. ; and that they are condemned by God in his word of truth ; and are therefore most sinful, and matter of public scandal, censurable by the discipline of the church, — and afford a solid ground for true church-members to withdraw from them in respect of church-communion, and for refusing to acknowledge such prelatical preachers as ministers of Christ.

God himself has made *Prelacy* a scandalous offence in his own word ; and therefore they cannot answer to him for it, who will take it upon themselves to make it a thing lawful or indifferent. Sinful men should thus invade the regalia of the Divine Majesty, and attempt to seat themselves in the throne of the Most High.

Recommending you, and our friends with you, to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, — who is given for a witness, a leader, and commander to the people ; I remain,

S I R,

Your affectionate friend,

May 22. }

1758. }

and humble servant,

A. M.

A LET-

A LETTER,

*Concerning the Secession of the BURGHERS.**To a Friend at Ab——deen, who has lately adopted
their Testimony.*

S I R,

IT is to be acknowledged, that there is one thing commendable in the society to which you have joined yourself, that, in words at least, they do own the second period of reformation, from the year 1638 to the year 1650; and that, in agreeableness thereto, they do maintain the perpetual obligation of our covenants, *national and solemn league.*

This appears from prints that have been published by one or other of them; from their obliging the elders lately ordained at *Ab——deen*, at their ordination, to declare that they do acknowledge the binding obligation of our covenants; and from their declaring to the people adhering unto them, that they intend to renew our covenants, so soon as matters are ripened for it.

But if it appears to be a thing plain and evident, that something quite inconsistent with the testimony above expressed is maintained by them; you had best consider of receding from them, and betaking yourself to such a way of witnessing for truth as will be consistent the one part with the other; seeing an inconsistent testimony destroys and overthrows itself at once, without an attack from any hand whatsoever, to the reproach of all those who adopt it by their profession.

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That something quite inconsistent with a testimony as above, for the second reformation-period, and inconsistent with acknowledging the binding force and obligation of our covenants upon posterity, is maintained by the Burgher-Seceders,—cannot be hid from any thinking man, who observes that they are defenders of the Burghers-oath; and have given an express allowance, to all under their inspection, to swear that religious clause in some Burghers-oaths, which is as follows: That they *profess, and allow, with their whole heart, the true religion presently professed in this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof*; and that they *shall abide thereat, and defend the same, to their life's end*.

Now, the religion presently professed in this realm, and authorised by the laws thereof,—cannot possibly be construed as referring to any other profession of religion, than that which is made by the established church; seeing this is the national profession of religion, and there is no other at present authorised by the laws of this realm.

But that our covenants, and the second period of reformation, were adopted in the revolution-settlement of religion, or belong to the profession made by the established church, and authorised by the laws of this realm,—is what none will pretend to say, the contrary being so manifestly the fact. And thus, adopting the profession authorised by the laws of the land, you manifestly recede from and give up with your profession of adherence to our covenants, and to the second period of reformation.

It must, in the nature of things, be quite inconsistent to maintain a profession of religion the very same with that of the established church, and yet to maintain a profession of religion different from it: To have a profession of religion *authorised* by the laws of this realm, which the man professes, and allows with

his whole heart, and which he swears to abide at and defend to his life's end; and notwithstanding to have another profession of religion, which is *not authorised* by the laws of this realm; seeing a man cannot have two different professions of religion, more than he can have two consciences.

When a man swears in general to the profession he doth make of religion, whether it be in a Burgess-oath, or in any other oath,—he must swear to the *whole* of his profession, and to what is his *only* profession of religion. This the *end* of dispensing the oath unto him requires; and this the *meaning* of the imposer manifestly declares: for the *intention, meaning, and design* of the imposer, is to know, and have it evidenced, *what* is the *whole* of the man's profession; and what is his *true, real, and only* profession of religion; and not to know what is a *part* of his profession.

And the man thus swearing, in the Burgess-oath, that the *first* period of reformation, as taken up in the revolution-settlement and profession of religion, is his *true, real, and only* profession of religion; he effectually *excludes* and *buries*, by his own oath, any profession he has made of the second period of reformation.

He has sworn to *abide at* the profession of religion adopting the first period of reformation. But in *abiding at* that profession, he cannot add to it his professing the second period of reformation; for this were to *add something* to it, which makes it another profession.

We are exhorted, *Heb. iv. 14.* to *hold fast our profession*; and that we may be assisted to do so, we are to *consider the Apostle and High-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, Heb. iii. 1.*

Our profession, mentioned in the text, imports a solemn declaration of our faith; and the word which is rendered *hold fast* in our translation, signifies to lay

hold of a thing, and to *retain it with all our might*; This shews that our profession is *one integral thing*, which we are to hold tenaciously; and that it cannot be a thing which we may *divide into so many parts*, and hold *one part* of it, and forgo and let slip another part of it, such as the second period of reformation,—in declaring upon oath, *what is our true, real, and only* profession of religion.

No; the Christian's profession must *be one*, and *uniform*, agreeable to the *one and uniform* rule thereof, which is the word of God.

We are directed to *hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*; for he is *faithful that promised*, Heb. x. 23. In the faith of the promise, and in a dependence upon the faithful Promiser, the *martyrs of Jesus* have been helped, in all ages, to maintain a *faithful and uniform testimony*: And particularly, our ancestors were enabled, through grace, to adhere unto the *whole* of their testimony. And many of them were helped to seal it with their blood, without having the least thought of professing but a *part* of their *testimony*, and keeping the rest of it in their own breast.

And further, by swearing, in the Burgefs-oath, that you *allow with your heart* the profession of religion in the established church, *authorised by the laws of this realm*,—you declare to the world, that your profession of religion is one and the same with the profession of religion in the established church. It must be very inconsistent, then, that you and your leaders pretend to be in a state of secession from the established church, and give out that you maintain a testimony against her profession of religion: Unless such an absurdity could be imagined, that a man is in the right, in maintaining a testimony against himself, and against his own profession of religion; and that he is fairly in a state of secession from himself,
and

and from his own principles, and from all that have the same sentiments with himself!

But, if matters are duly considered, you are *certainly* in *communion* with the established church, notwithstanding your pretended *secession* from her. For a *conjunction* and *union*, in an oath concerning religion, with the members of the established church, must, in the nature of the thing, be the strongest *tie* unto, and the most *glaring evidence* of your being in *communion* with her. And if you refuse that you are in communion with those with whom you maintain the same profession of religion,—you must own, at the same time, that you are in *communion* with no body at all.

Likewise, by your maintaining the *same* profession of religion only with the established church, you must certainly approve of and homologate all her *defections* and *corruptions*; such as the giving up with attained-to reformation in the second period thereof, the burying our covenants, and other *injuries* to the cause of Christ, in the revolution-settlement of religion; the intrusions upon vacant congregations, and other attacks made upon the interests of the church of Christ, contrary to our solemn national vows in our covenants: for these are authorised by the laws of the land; and your profession of religion is the profession authorised by the laws of the land, and *no other*; it being the profession *you* have solemnly adopted, than which a man, according to conscience, can have *no other*. And the profession sworn unto, is the *present* profession of religion, authorised by the laws of the land, in this year 1758, as the words of the oath do expressly bear; which are, “I profess, and allow with
“my whole heart, the true religion *presently* profes-
“sed in this realm, and authorised by the laws there-
“of.”—And it cannot be imagined, that you maintain a testimony against the intrusions of these times,
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and other similar corruptions, which are prevailing in the established church, and are authorised by the laws of this realm; seeing you have *one* and the *same* present profession of religion with that which is presently professed in this realm, and is authorised by the laws thereof.

And seeing this is a time of *general* and *growing* defection, when a *public* and *formal* testimony against it ought to be steadily maintained; can ye have peace in your minds, in being sinfully silent about all the corruptions of these times, and in hardening the generation, — by swearing to it, that you allow with your whole heart the religion presently professed in this realm, authorised by the laws thereof, and that you will abide at this your profession to your life's end? by which you evidently give up with the second period of reformation; and not only homologate and approve of the revolution-settlement, but likewise of the awful corruptions otherwise prevailing in the times wherein we live.

Another glaring *inconsistency* is the proposal that has been long spoken of among you, of renewing our covenants, National and Solemn League, among the Burgher-Seceders.

Some well-meaning people among you have signified their desire to their leaders, that this solemn work, which they think a seasonable duty, should be set about; and have been encouraged to hope that they would endeavour to satisfy them, as to this their desire, in due time.

What were the motives of your leaders, in making such declarations to the people from time to time; with what sincerity they made them; or if their making such promises to the people proceeded, as to some of them, from their not well understanding themselves the new system of principles they had sinfully and

unwarrantably adopted; I do not at all propose to determine. But this one thing I will adventure to say, and I hope to be assisted to make it good, and evident to every man that is not prejudiced,—That such a renovation of our covenants, in the circumstance of what is now become their public and avowed profession of religion, was altogether impracticable; without rushing into the most awful perjury and impiety.

That the reformation of the second period is sworn to in our covenants, none will doubt; and it is evident to all, that our covenants, and the second period of reformation are buried in the revolution-settlement, and are *not* authorised by the laws of this realm; and that your profession sworn to in the Burges-oath, is the profession of religion *authorised* by the laws of the land, and *no other*.

It were therefore altogether inconsistent and contradictory, for you to swear, in the covenants, to the second period of reformation, which is *not* authorised by the laws of the land; when you have declared by oath, that your *only* profession of religion is that authorised by the laws of the land, and *no other*.

This inconsistency will appear in a glaring light, when it is considered, that, in the Burges-oath, you solemnly declare, that you allow with your whole heart the *religion professed*, and so the profession of *religion authorised* by the laws of the land, and promise and vow to *abide thereat* to your life's end.

You have vowed to *abide at* the profession of religion authorised by the laws of the land: but *abiding at* that profession, you cannot *add* to it your professing the second period of reformation; for this were to *add* something to it which makes it another profession: and this were to violate your former oath, by not *abiding at* your former profession.

In the revolution-settlement, a testimony against *Prelacy* was dropt and laid aside, and presbyterial government was authorised, *only*, as most agreeable to the inclinations of the people; but nothing was owned of its being the only government of Christ's institution in his word.

In the Burgeſs-oath, then, you give up with a testimony against *Prelacy*; but, in the oath of our covenants, you swear in the strongest terms against it. To allow with your heart a profession burying a testimony against *Prelacy*, and yet to swear an explicit testimony against *Prelacy*, must be altogether inconsistent. Thus, to swear to such inconsistencies in your profession, behoved to be most sinful and dangerous.

Further, In the second period of reformation, patronages were rescinded; in this period they are authorised by the laws of the land,—which are the criterion, rule, and measure of your profession of religion. And you cannot consistently swear a testimony against patronage, and yet give up with a testimony against it.

Without enumerating all particulars, it shall be only added,—that, in our covenants, the reformation of *England* is solemnly engaged unto: But in the union-settlement, a national consent is given, that the parliament of *England* take what steps they think proper, to secure their church-government with all its corruptions in the same state wherein it is at present.

This is the present profession of religion, authorised by the laws of this land, at which you are to *abide* to your life's end. And therefore you cannot join in renewing our covenants; because to swear to endeavour the reformation of *England*, and yet to consent to her deformation,—are quite inconsistent, and contradictory the one to the other.

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From what is above represented it appears evident, that a renovation of our covenants among Burgher-seceders is altogether impracticable, — without swearing contradictory oaths, which would involve them in the most awful perjury ; which we hope God, in his mercy, will keep them from adventuring upon.

Another *inconsistency* is, your constituting yourselves into a synod ; giving out that you are the Associate Synod, constituted in a way of secession from the established church, maintaining a testimony against her ; and against all her corruptions, and defections from attained-to reformation.

But it is impossible that you can be in a state of secession from the established church, when you are of one communion with her ; as you make one and the same profession of religion with her, and that by the solemnity of an oath, which is the strictest bond of communion with her.

And you cannot, as has been shown, maintain a testimony against her profession of religion, it being one and the same profession of religion you have sworn unto ; unless you keep up a testimony against yourselves, and your own profession of religion.

Neither can you maintain a testimony against her defections from attained-to reformation in the second period of reformation, and other corruptions ; for, by swearing to her *present* profession in this year 1758 ; which is the *only present* profession authorised by the laws of the land, you homologate and approve of all her defections and corruptions. You do not swear to the profession of religion that took place in some *past* time, but to the *present* profession ; as the words of the oath expressly bear, — “ *I profess, and allow, with my whole heart, the true religion presently professed within this realm.*”

From all which it is evident, how absurd and irrational your pretences have been that you are the Associate Synod, witnessing for attained-to reformation in that reforming period betwixt 1638 and 1650; and maintaining a testimony, in a way of secession from the established church, against her giving up with attained-to reformation in the revolution-settlement,—and against her other corruptions.

If you consider the matter in a cool and deliberate way,—you will certainly be persuaded,—that your coming under the bond of the Burghers-oath, for a profession of religion in conjunction with the members of the established church, is altogether inconsistent with your being in a state of secession from her; and with sealing the secession-testimony against her, by the oath of our covenants.

Consider how inconsistent your pretensions are to be the witnessing synod, maintaining a testimony against the defections of these times; when you yourselves have given up with the whole of the testimony as among the hands of the witnessing synod, and have adopted a profession of religion quite subversive thereof.

And when you yourselves have given up with the testimony of the day, and with our allegiance to the King of Zion, by adopting an oath contradictory unto them; how can ye answer to God, for constituting *pretended courts* in his name, to keep his *cause* underground, which ye yourselves have *buried*,—and to seduce his people from the covenant of the Lord God of our fathers; and thus *make Israel to sin*?

An ecclesiastical court, abandoning the testimony for reformation and for the cause of Christ, which is the basis upon which it was constituted,—can be no more acknowledged as a court of Christ, than we can own the betrayers of his cause to be the defenders of it, or that those who pull down his work are the builders of it.

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Wherefore it may be astonishing, and matter of grief to every sober man,—that, after you had buried the testimony for truth as among the hands of the witnessing synod, and thus dishonoured the God of truth in a most awful manner, and involved yourselves in the grossest of scandals by so doing; you should, notwithstanding, go on presumptuously, when the Lord was not among you, to constitute yourselves into a *pretended synod*!

Such presumptuous conduct, in men under such gross scandal of *betraying* and *burying* the called-for *testimony of the day*,—is a bold affronting of God to his face, and a daring opposition to the work and cause of Christ; as it is likewise a gross profanation of the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, by invoking him in such *pretended meetings*, which are mere associations against him, and his cause and declarative glory: and it is, in like manner, a spurning against the *discipline* of his house,—the means of God's appointment, for recovering you from your course of apostasy from the Lord.

The instances of *Miram*, and of *Korah* and his followers, are awful, and remarkable to this purpose!

The society you are now joined unto have exclaimed, in the most indecent terms, against the discipline of Christ's house; those means which the synod, according to the rule of the word, were obliged to use for reclaiming you and others, and for bringing you back to your allegiance to Christ, and your duty to him.

You have pretended, that you are not involved in any scandal, and therefore not censurable. But is a man involved in no scandal, who has sworn that the revolution-settlement of religion is corrupt, and ought to be reformed, and that he himself will use all his endeavours to have it reformed, (which is the case
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with such of you as joined in the bond for renewing our covenants;) and the next day swears that the revolution-settlement of religion is sound, and is approved of by him,—and that he will abide at and defend the said profession of religion to his life's end? And this is exactly the case of you Burgher-seceders!

Is not a man censurable for swearing or defending contradictory oaths? Is he not guilty of an open violation of the moral law, and of an impious attack upon the perfections of God? and has not God in his word denounced the most terrible judgments upon such as thus profanely take his holy name in vain? And is not perjury censurable, according to all the rules laid down in the word of God?

It is in vain to pretend, that they are involved in no errors or mistakes, which make them censurable.

The synod have found it proven against them,—That, in their reasons of protest, they have adopted the principle of *tolerating known and acknowledged sin*: which is manifestly a gross error, formerly testified against by themselves.

Can it be once supposed, that the separating brethren are involved in no *errors* and mistakes, when they are evidently *pulling* down that which once they professed to *build*? when they are setting themselves to *vindicate* the apostasy and defection of this land, in the present national-settlement and profession of religion,—which they formerly acknowledged to be corrupt, and vowed to endeavour its reformation? when they are seducing the Lord's people from their allegiance to Zion's King, by allowing them to swear the religious clause of the Burgefs-oath,—which is manifestly contradictory to the oath of our covenants?

It is certain that there must be *error* in judgment here; which is very bad, and therefore censurable. But if that is refused, there must be something yet worse in the case; which I am by no means willing

to

to impute unto them. For it must be owned, that it was an *error* in judgment, or something a great deal worse, in *Jeroboam* the son of *Nebat*, when he made *Israel* to sin.

And it cannot be refused, that whatever is an open or public breach of the moral law, and is therefore a matter of scandal and offence to the church of Christ,—is a *scandal* in *practice*, and therefore censurable, according to the rules of the word.

And of this kind is their conduct in setting up a *false altar* of their own invention, in opposition to the *true altar*; their *profaning* the name of God, by constituting *pretend'd courts* in the name of Christ, after they had buried his cause and testimony for truth, as stated in opposition to the corruptions of the present times; and their *violating* the solemn oath they came under, in the renewing of our covenants,—by which they solemnly engaged to endeavour the reformation of the revolution-settlement and profession of religion, of which they are now become warm and keen defenders.

And of this kind is their practice, of obstinately persisting in their course of apostasy and defection; and in defying the *censures* of the church justly inflicted upon them, which is an open dishonouring of Christ himself; they being his own ordinances, according to his appointment, and in his name passed against them,—for the ends of the edification of his church, for his own honour and glory, and for their recovery.

And as they are evidently seducing the Lord's people, and are hardening the generation in their course of apostasy from the Lord, and ripening them for approaching judgments; so to all these transgressions they have superadded an obstinate and continued *contumacy*.

And

And it must be acknowledged, that *contumacy*, in not hearing the church, is a public scandal which concerns the whole church; and that it is an attack upon the constitution of the courts of Christ, and an attempt at once to pull down the whole order and discipline of his house.

And it is very manifest, if we duly consider the scriptures of truth,—that when good men are in the transgression, and are seducing the people of the Lord into a course of defection and apostasy; the discipline of the church ought to be exercised against them with much vigour and faithfulness.

For the better the men are, and the more any of them are regarded among the people, the scandal and offence is in so far the greater; the greater is the dishonour done to the Lord, and the greater is the occasion of stumbling to the weak, and of hardening the generation in their course of apostasy.

And if we consider the nature of the offence given by the separating brethren, and the quality and character of the persons offending, with the former profession they have made, and the *vows* they have come under to *oppose* that *very* course of defection which they themselves have now taken,—together with their *obstinacy* and continued *contumacy*; it will appear very manifest, that no other than the *highest censure* of the church could have been any way adequate and suitable to the scandal and offence which they have given. For our Lord Jesus Christ hath expressly commanded his office-bearers assembled in his courts of judgment,—that they *cut off* such members from the church, by the *higher excommunication*, who superadd *contumacy* to their other offences; and he has promised that he himself will ratify such a sentence in heaven, *Matth. xviii. 17, 18.*

Judicatures constituted in the name of Christ, are not left at their own liberty to come and go in the matters

matters of God : No ; the rule is plain, direct, and most exprefs to the purpose : and the officers of Christ's house must judge faithfully, and without respect of persons, *Deut. i. 16, 17.*

And the end of *this*, as well as of other *church-censures*, is not the hurt of their persons, but *the destruction of their flesh* ; that is, of their corruptions, which insnare and intangle them, and tend to obstruct the salvation of their souls ; that, by the Lord's blessing his own ordinance of discipline, they *may be ashamed*, 1 Thess. iii. 14. and brought to return to the Lord, and unto their duty to him ; and that *their spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus*, 1 Cor. v. 5.

This might be further illustrated from the holy scriptures, and our received principles laid down in our standards ; which, as assisted, may be done afterwards, if there is occasion for it. Mean time you may consider with attention the doctrine upon this subject, which is expressed in our Confession of Faith, Chap. xxx. § 1, 2, 3, 4. with the scriptures there cited.

And seeing every unprejudiced person, who has knowledge in those matters, will assuredly be convinced, from what is above advanced,—that the highest censure of the church was absolutely necessary in the case as stated ; you need gravely to consider of the matter, that you and all others in conjunction with them are *materially* under the same censure with them, as being partakers in their sin and defection from the Lord.

And however men may think lightly of it, yet if it is duly animadverted unto, and the matter impartially weighed in the balance of the sanctuary,—it will be found, that the circumstances of your case are very awful, and ought to be alarming unto you.

We

We have reason to commiserate the condition of those who vilify our covenant-engagements to the most high God. We have ground to believe, that God, who is a party in them, will see to his own honour and glory; and we have ground to apprehend, that it will be to the expence of such as have been active in contemning them, and in endeavouring to cause the memory of them to cease.

But as for you and your associates, who acknowledge the binding obligation of our covenants, National and Solemn League; to approve the violation and burying of them in the revolution-settlement of religion, is such a manifest and awful contradiction unto, and such an evident thrust at all the principles of religion, whether natural or revealed,—that words are wanting to express the malignity of it.

Your justly retaining the principle, that our covenants, National and Solemn League, are of binding obligation upon posterity, and therefore upon you and all others in these covenanted lands,—has with good reason excited a desire among some serious people in conjunction with you, to have these covenants renewed.

Their proposal is most laudable, it being a necessary and seasonable duty in this period; as might be clearly illustrated, from the circumstances of the times wherein our lot is cast; and it must be matter of lamentation, if ye continue in such circumstances as make the renewing them impracticable.

And if they consider matters duly, they must be convinced, from what is advanced in the preceding pages,—that, in order to this, they must give up with the sinful and inconsistent profession which they have, by mistake, prejudice, or otherwise, been led into; and avouch a profession of religion consistent with the renovation of our covenants: and likewise be brought

to a conviction and humble acknowledgment of their sin, in the great dishonour they have done the Lord; and to declare the same before the courts of Christ's house;—that the scandal may be purged according to the discipline of the church of Christ; and so they may be admitted to join in the solemn work of renewing our covenants and vows to the most high God.

The sealing of the witnesses is a great and singular privilege, in a time of defection, prevailing error and delusion,—and when an awful storm of national judgments is like to burst out, to the terror of all; and when we are threatened with an inundation of Popish idolatry, which once more, in appearance, will be the trial of these lands, *Rev. vii. 1, 2.* And they seem to have no knowledge of the signs of these times, who see no necessity of this privilege, and are careless of obtaining it, *Ezek. ix. 4, 5, 6.*

There is an inward seal, known only to God; which is the privilege of each member of the church *invisible*. And there is an outward seal, in a *visible* profession, by men's devoting themselves to be *the servants of our God*; and by adhering to the truths and cause of God, and to all the reformation attained to by the mercy and goodness of God towards these lands; which we are called to adopt, maintain, and defend; and ought, according to the example of our ancestors, to testify and declare the same by renewing our vows to the most high God.

It is our duty to confess Christ, when the generation are denying him; lest, being found among those who deny him, he deny us,—and leave us, in the hour of temptation, to be driven away from our steadfastness into errors and apostasy, and to be deluded more and more.

Christ's care and protection is of infinite benefit to us at all times, and especially in times of trial: and

it is in the way of being found among the retinue of the Lamb on Mount Zion, with his Father's name in our foreheads, and in the exercise of faith's dependence upon him and close walking with him, that we are to expect it.

And therefore, as we would be kept from the sins and judgments of the times,—let us devote ourselves in a way of faith to be the servants of our God, and give ourselves to the Lord, by taking hold of God's covenant of promise, and devoting ourselves to the Lord in a covenant of duty; according to the example of our ancestors, in our covenants, National and Solemn League,—which you acknowledge to be of perpetual obligation, and of binding force upon you and posterity.

In order to which it is necessary, that you give up with the inconsistent scheme of principles which you have too rashly gone into; and adopt such principles as are consistent the one with the other,—and are agreeable to the principles of our covenanted reformation, sworn to in our solemn covenants.

Wherefore, Sir,—as you, the members of the established church, and all ranks in these lands, are under the obligation and binding force of those vows made by our ancestors to the most high God; it is high time for all to return to their allegiance unto him: and thus to *give glory to the Lord our God, before our feet stumble on the dark mountains; and while we look for light, it be turned into the shadow of death.* I remain,

S I R,

*Your affectionate friend,
and humble servant,*

NOVEMBER 3d, }
1758.



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